

TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER HANDBOOK

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**Rhode Island Division of Statewide Planning
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The three main agencies responsible for transportation planning in Rhode Island include the Rhode Island Department of Administration's Division of Statewide Planning (RIDSP), Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT), and the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA).

These three agencies cooperate to develop the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), State Freight and Goods Movement Plan, Transit Master Plan, Bicycle Mobility Plan, Strategic Highway Safety Plan, and Congestion Management Process Plan, among other items.

- **RIDSP** coordinates and compiles the program of projects RIDOT and RIPTA put forward to develop the STIP. RIDSP also leads the development of other transportation plans including the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), State Freight and Goods Movement Plan, Congestion Management Process Plan, and Bicycle Mobility Plan. RIDSP is responsible for actively seeking public participation during these plans public review and adoption process. RIDSP serves as staff to the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).
- **RIDOT** is responsible for designing, constructing, and maintaining the state's surface transportation system including bridges, pavement, safety, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, stormwater systems for the roads. RIDOT is also responsible for some of the State's ferries including the seasonal Providence to Newport ferry, rail transit facilities in Rhode Island, and tolling facilities.
- **RIPTA** serves as the Statewide transit provider offering fixed route bus, paratransit, flex zone, and commuter services, as well as human services transportation coordination and facilitation of transportation alternatives on behalf of educational institutions, employers, and community organizations.

What is a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)?

A Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is the policy board of an organization created and designated to carry out the metropolitan transportation planning process. MPOs are required to represent localities in all urbanized areas (UZAs) with populations over 50,000, as determined by the U.S. Census. MPOs are designated by agreement between the governor and local governments that together represent at least 75 percent of the affected population (including the largest incorporated city, based on population) or in accordance with procedures established by applicable state or local law. When submitting a transportation improvement program to the state for inclusion in the statewide program, MPOs self-certify that they have met all federal requirements. An urbanized area with a population over 200,000, as defined by the Bureau of the Census and designated by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), is called a Transportation Management Area (TMA). As described in 49 U.S.C. 5303(k), and in recognition of the greater complexity of transportation issues in large urban areas, an MPO in a TMA has a stronger voice in setting priorities for implementing projects listed in the transportation improvement program and are responsible for additional planning products. The planning processes in MPOs in TMAs also must be certified by the Secretary of DOT as being in compliance with federal requirements. There are presently approximately 408 MPOs in the United States, and Rhode Island is ranked 50th, in terms of size. Rhode Island is the only state with both a single MPO and a single state-level planning agency.

WHAT IS THE STATE PLANNING COUNCIL (SPC)?

The Rhode Island State Planning Council (SPC) oversees the Division of Statewide Planning's work. The State Planning Council adopts goals and policies related to planning, most of which are contained within individual plans, which are elements of the State Guide Plan. The Council has been designated as a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for transportation planning purposes and, as such, the Council adopts the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), a four-year program of transportation investments.

WHAT IS THE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TAC)?

The Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) is a subcommittee of the State Planning Council (SPC). The SPC appoints the TAC members according to RI General Law §42-11-10(f)(5)(iii). The TAC has two principal purposes: to encourage early and continuing public involvement in the transportation planning process; and to develop, in conjunction with the Division of Statewide Planning, transportation planning documents that are the responsibility of the SPC.

TAC Membership

The number of members of the TAC is determined by the SPC and may be changed from time to time. It is imperative that the membership reflect a diversity of geographic parts of the State and of transportation interests. Membership must include, at a minimum:

- Four (4) local government officials.
- A representative from each of the following four (4) State agencies:
 - RI Public Transit Authority.
 - RI Department of Environmental Management.
 - RI Commerce Corporation.
 - RI Department of Transportation.
- Other members may be appointed to reflect transportation user-groups and organizations, advocacy organizations, the construction industry, interested members of the public, and the Narragansett Indian Tribe.

Roles Fulfilled by the TAC

The TAC shall advise or assist the SPC by:

1. *Identifying the planning priorities and activities to be carried out in the preparation of the Unified Planning Work Program.*
2. *Initiating and overseeing the update of the Long-Range Transportation Plan and State Transportation Improvement Program.*
3. *Providing advice on elements of the State Guide Plan that may relate to or be coordinated with transportation plans such as the Freight Plan, Congestion Management Plan, Bicycle Mobility Plan, Transit Master Plan, etc.*
4. *Coordinate with the Air Quality Working Group to demonstrate air quality conformity for the LRTP and STIP.*
5. *Identify performance measures, determine needs, evaluate and select appropriate strategies, and evaluate the effectiveness of implementation strategies to assist decisionmakers in selecting cost effective strategies to improve the efficiency and safety of the Transportation Management System.*
6. *Assist in maintaining and periodically assessing the public participation process.*

The plans and programs that the TAC is responsible for reviewing are detailed in below.

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

The UPWP outlines the transportation planning activities and projects that the Division of Statewide Planning, as the State's Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), and its partnering entities expect to conduct over the next year. It serves as the basis by which Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) urban transportation planning funds are spent in the State of Rhode Island. Additionally, the UPWP serves as a management tool for scheduling, budgeting, and monitoring the planning activities of the participating entities. It also includes activities undertaken by the Division that are not funded through FHWA and FTA transportation funds.

Long-Range Transportation Plan



The State's Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) – Moving Forward Rhode Island 2040, is a multi-modal statewide transportation plan with a 20-year planning horizon. For the purposes of Federal coordination, the plan serves as a combined statewide transportation plan and metropolitan transportation plan. It outlines the goals, objectives, policies, and strategies to guide transportation decisions toward improving the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the state.

The plan is updated every 5 years as the State of Rhode Island is currently classified as an air quality attainment area. The plan will be updated every 4 years should the MPO become an air quality non-attainment area. In addition, the LRTP is also adopted as an element of the State Guide Plan. As such, it becomes the basis for determining consistency of municipal comprehensive plans and other plans, programs and projects with the transportation policies of the State.

The current LRTP, Moving Forward Rhode Island 2040, was adopted by the State Planning Council (SPC) on December 10, 2020. Moving Forward RI is a departure from the LRTPs of the past for three primary reasons:

1. *It is data-driven and goals-oriented plan*
2. *The goals are SMART – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Based*
3. *It incorporates a Bicycle Mobility Plan and the first-of-its-kind Transit Master Plan*

In addition, and importantly, this LRTP has been established in coordination with other statewide transportation plans and processes, including but not limited to the Highway Safety Improvement Program, the Strategic Highway Safety Plan, the State Asset Management Plan for the National Highway System (NHS), the Rhode Island Freight and Goods Movement Plan, the Transit Master Plan, the Congestion Management Process/Plan, the Bicycle Mobility Plan, and the Transit Master Plan.

State Transportation Improvement Program



The State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) is a list of transportation projects the State of Rhode Island reasonably expects to implement during a defined period using State, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding, and other various funding sources. The STIP reflects investment priorities established in the LRTP and covers a minimum period of four fiscally-constrained (4) years. The STIP is developed in close cooperation with RIDOT and RIPTA, as they are the primary agencies responsible for the implementation of the projects listed in the STIP. The STIP is multimodal, and as such, it includes the following types of projects: bridge, drainage, maintenance, pavement, traffic safety, transit, and active transportation.

Federally eligible projects may be solicited from municipalities during the STIP development process. Each municipality must hold individual public hearings on their STIP project requests to the State made in response to a solicitation. The first four (4) years of the STIP must be fiscally constrained; meaning the list of projects in the STIP may not exceed the anticipated funding that is reasonably expected to be available. Unless otherwise provided for by federal requirements, projects utilizing federal funds must be included in a federally approved STIP. The SPC is responsible for adopting the STIP: the most recent STIP was adopted on September 9, 2021 and covers the implementation of projects during federal fiscal years 2022 to 2031.

Additional TAC Roles in Preparing the STIP

When developing a new STIP, the TAC is delegated the responsibility to advise the SPC and to perform the following functions:

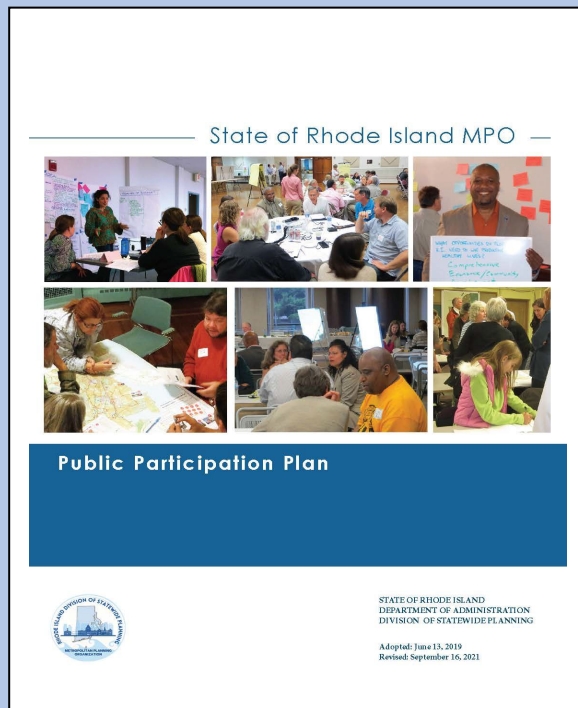
- Making recommendations for the STIP adoption process.
- Making recommendations for STIP program funding levels.
- Holding STIP public hearings on behalf of the SPC.
- Reviewing and recommend staff's data-driven project recommendations.
- Reviewing public comments and input related to the proposed STIP.

When reviewing STIP Amendments, major amendments are reviewed by the TAC and a recommendation is made to the SPC for approval, denial, or modification. Minor amendments are reviewed and approved, modified, or denied directly by the TAC.

Public Participation Plan

A critical component of statewide planning is public involvement. The Rules and Standards of the State Planning Council, specifically Rule 1.5 Metropolitan Planning Organization: Transportation Planning, details public involvement in the development of these key documents.

In addition, the Division utilizes the 2019 Public Participation Plan (PPP) for engaging in community outreach when preparing plans. The PPP continuously seeks to create opportunities for the public to participate in planning, reviewing, and implementing its transportation projects and programs. The MPO updates the PPP on an as needed basis.



TAC Member Meeting Roles and Responsibilities

All TAC meetings are chaired by an annually elected Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson. The Chairperson presides over all meetings of the TAC and keeps the agenda on track, recognizes members and other persons desiring to speak, and calls for motions and votes on all issues. The Vice-Chairperson would perform the duties and exercise the powers of the Chair in the absence or incapacity of the Chairperson, until such time as the Chair returns or a new Chair is elected.

During and leading up to monthly TAC meetings, member responsibilities include:

- Review TAC minutes for accuracy.
- Review meeting materials, including supplements and documents for discussion and/or action, in advance of a TAC meeting.
- Know when to recuse oneself from a discussion due to conflict of interest; or questionable conduct such as: ex parte communication; violation of Open Meetings Act; or oral or written contact outside of a meeting.
 - An ex parte communication happens when a public official is contacted by an individual or group with an interest in the outcome of the vote, the official is outside of a public meeting, and there is an attempt to influence or secure a public official's vote or opinion.
- Attend all meetings, as attendance is extremely important to reach a quorum, so that agenda items can be discussed and voted upon.
 - Missing three meetings in a row can result in a request to step aside to ensure full representation and participation.
- Become familiar with and adhere to the [Rules and Standards](#) of the State Planning Council

TAC Meeting Logistics

TAC Meetings take place from January through November. They are held the fourth Thursday of every month, except for the month of November, when the meeting takes place on the third Thursday due to the Thanksgiving holiday. They start at 5:30pm and are scheduled for an hour and a half. The meetings are typically hosted at One Capitol Hill, Providence, at the Department of Administration in the Cornelison Conference Room (Conference Room 2A) on the Second Floor and are presented in a hybrid Zoom/in-person format. Meetings may also be held in other locations throughout the state, but advance notice will be given.

While the meetings may have a Zoom component, voting members of the TAC must attend in person. Meetings are open to the public with an allocated time on the agenda when the public may be heard. With advance notice, 'reasonable accommodations' or the services of an interpreter can be provided.

FREQUENTLY USED ACRONYMS

ADA -	Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
CRMC -	Coastal Resources Management Council
EFSB -	Energy Facility Siting Board
FFY -	Federal Fiscal Year (October 1 – September 30)
FHWA -	Federal Highway Administration
FRA -	Federal Railroad Administration
FTA -	Federal Transit Administration
FY -	Fiscal Year (State Fiscal Year: July 1 – June 30)
LEP -	Limited English Proficiency
LRTP -	Long-Range Transportation Plan
MPO -	Metropolitan Planning Organization
MBTA -	Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority
NHS -	National Highway System
PPP -	Public Participation Plan
RIDEM -	Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management
RIDOH -	Rhode Island Department of Health
RIDOT -	Rhode Island Department of Transportation
RIEMA -	Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency
RIGIS -	Rhode Island Geographic Information System
RIIB -	Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank
RIPTA -	Rhode Island Public Transit Authority
RIDSP -	Rhode Island Division of Statewide Planning (Department of Administration)
SGP -	State Guide Plan
SPC -	State Planning Council
STIP -	State Transportation Improvement Program (also see “TIP”)
TAC -	Transportation Advisory Committee
TAP -	Transportation Alternative Program
TETC -	The Eastern Transportation Coalition
TIP -	Transportation Improvement Program (also see “STIP”)
TMA -	Transportation Management Area
UPWP -	Unified Planning Work Program
USDOT -	United States Department of Transportation
USGS -	United State Geological Service
UZA -	Urbanized Area
WRB -	Water Resources Board

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